

says they are not is ignorant of what is folk and are not to be considered criterions.

So, too, the jitter-bug was an expression of the American town, the nervous, self-conscious life of our industrial cities. No one invented the dance, no dancing master correlated the steps; they are a natural urge of boys and girls from the city streets, influenced by colored jazz bands, to let themselves go. There is no dignity in the dance, it lacks the simplicity of the dances of an agrarian way of life, but it is authentic city folk lore, just as the tango is of Argentina, or rather Buenos Aires. Argentines, as you know have their own version of the square dance.

There are some who claim that the miners' songs lack the true elements of a folk song. A true folk song is an expression of the peoples' life and aspirations, and as such deserves the name of 'folk'. The deficiencies in them that bother some students are only the deficiencies in the miners' life. It is only in a well-organized agrarian civilization that the folk song flows in an unending stream of rich, varied melodies and lyrics. The miners have never been quite sure of themselves, and the change in racial composition of the population of the mining settlements came too swiftly for any deep shoots of artistic expression to be rooted. It is the same with jazz and swing. They have not the confidence, the broad sweep, the ease of the cowboy song or a peasant melody. A common fallacy that I add to my list of criticisms of the folk dance situation is the lack of discrimination. Dance leaders have the notion that if it is 'folk' then it should be done. There is good folk art and bad folk art, just as there is in the fine arts. Some folk dances are vulgar, inartistic or clumsy. When there exists an inexhaustible source of material from which to choose, why, say I plaintively, choose the least beautiful and interesting.

A true folk dance is a voice from the people, many of whom are otherwise inarticulate. The simpler, the more dignified it is the more authentic. A folk dance, too, is a community affair and has an historical and religious significance. Even though nowadays the true significance has been forgotten still when the folk perform it they have an instinctive feeling of why they do it, even though they express it sometimes as simply, "We have always done it this way. It wouldn't be right to change it". To many of our European brethren to change one of their national dances is tantamount to throwing mud on the national flag.

Another theory that has been argued acerbiciously by professional folklorists is the one that maintains that when conditions under which the dance was created have changed the need for doing the dance had passed and therefore why dig it up out of the past? Well, that betrays a lamentable lack of knowledge. I would, it is true, rather have a dance disappear than see it done wrongly or badly. When a dance is performed under changed conditions then it either becomes degenerate or becomes a work of art. If dances are to be forgotten simply because the people who did them have passed on, then the same argument could be used for all the collections in historical and archeological museums. The dance being intangible and needing the human body to express it, cannot be put into a museum. Do the photographs and precious fragments of figures from pediments and pylons give us any idea of how the ancient Greeks and Egyptians danced? Very little. Reading the descriptions of the dances will not give us a clear picture of the folk who danced them. I say the dances should be preserved, but should be performed only by those who understand the background and history of the dances and whose director is an artist.

I have seen dances at festivals in Europe and at the National Folk Festival that have been a revelation; a

living, pulsating fragment of a race and a culture. When those cowboy dances walk on the stage at the National Folk Festival anyone with any imagination at all gets the impression of vast plains, of a free and easy way of life. And as they dance the feeling is intensified. And those Haitian dancers that performed in Washington one year; for the few minutes they were on the stage they injected into the auditorium, Haiti itself. There was hardly a person there who didn't feel that here was something important, something alive. At times the feeling of eeriness, of something satanic was powerful. I felt it and so did many with whom I talked.

Those who were fortunate to attend the International Folk Festival in London in 1935 will remember the Morris dancers. Whoever directed that group was an artist. No group I believe should make a public performance unless they have a leader who knows what the dance is all about, who has seen it in its original habitat, either in the native land, or among ethnic group in this country (although these ethnic groups are not always to be trusted). The leader should give a running commentary on the dance itself, its history, significance, styles and local idiosyncrasies while he teaches. If the leader does not know all this, he shouldn't teach.

If the chief purpose of the dance is merely enjoyment that is something else again. I say go ahead, let them have their good time, but for the sake of clarity and artistic integrity, let them never come out into the open, never let them set themselves up as authentic dancers, as carriers of a native culture. Let them dance to their heart's content, more power to them. If these leaders were as careful in their research into the dances as they are into those of costume, there would be no cause for criticism. There are exceptions, of course, maybe a half a dozen teachers in this country, and Vytautas Beliajus is one of them.

I am very concerned over this question because if we could see the native expressions of the world's people in their true form we would much better understand each other. But now, certainly, as things are in the dance field, there is very little understanding. Much that is being written and produced artistically reaches only the intellectuals. The people, the folk, who are trying so desperately to understand, have no spokesman. Let them speak for themselves through the ways they know best — the folk dance, the folk song, folk poetry, costumes, homely objects, carvings, handicrafts. Maybe much will be accomplished. I like to think so.

Happy Lament

By Burton Lawrence

Joyce Kilmer says that poems are made
By fools like me—and him;
But when the evening shadows fade
And afterglow grows dim,
In flights of fancy far I go
And linger by some pool
In moonlit glade where fireflies glow:
And that makes me a fool.
But on these vesper journeyings,
I travel all alone;
I don't depend on folks or things,
I'm strictly on my own.
I conjure up to suit my mood
A clown or chummy ghoul.
My time's my own to act or brood:
At least, I'm no one's fool.



SQUARE DANCERS FROM TEXAS

THE NATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL

The 13th Annual Folk Festival was held at the Kiel Auditorium of St. Louis, Mo., the place of its origin. Amos Kubik, the town crier from Provincetown, Mass., rang the bell as he has each year to announce the opening of the festival and to introduce Sarah Gertrude Knott, the tireless founder of the National Folk Festival. The richly feathered Kiowa Indians from Oklahoma presented their chants and dances as they have each year since their first appearance in St. Louis 13 years ago. These American aborigines opened each program. No other Indian tribe surpasses the Kiowas in their richly colored regalia of fascinating feather adornments that enhance the fantasy of movement. Another Indian group appeared but twice, the Onadagos, an Iroquois people from New York. These, considered civilized when the pilgrims arrived on American shores, and members of the Five Great Nations and wore subdued colors and simple clothes. Their dances were easier to understand because they somewhat resembled the dance now current in the United States.

The Ozark and the North Carolina square dance groups showed an affinity with the Onadago dances, save that the square dance groups added Irish jigging, tap, soft shoe, and buck and wing to their dervishing. There were other square dance groups, the Texans next best to the N. C. group.

Many groups of past years appeared: miners, fiddlers, balladsingers and singers of the "plain" songs. The grade school age group who attended the week-day afternoon programs enjoyed particularly the Indians, Mr. Romaine Lowdermilk from Arizona who sang cowboy songs, the Polish, Lithuanian, Filipino and English dancers. An especially loud ovation went to W. C. Handy, composer of the "St. Louis Blues". No individual was more popular than he. Another "celebrity" was the widow of Casey Jones, a frail little old lady whose husband is perpetuated in railroad ballads.

Jimmy De Noon, a strapping six-and-half-foot huskie from the Ozarks, who thirteen years ago, participated as a small child in the National Folk Festival, appeared again playing his fiddle. His rendition of "Listen To The Mocking Bird" was a masterpiece. The fiddler sang in perfect imitation the songs of the birds to such perfection that the people could not refrain from applauding even though with their applause they often drowned out his playing.

The English Morris, Country and Sword dancers from Fairhope, Ala., are still the finest dancers of this type; a clean cut group that dances smoothly and charmingly. The Filipinos from Washington, D. C., presented

a number of unusual dances: Tinikling, a bamboo dance based on the movements of long-legged Filipino birds, was a hit each time it was performed. The dancers hop in and out between bamboo poles to the rhythm produced by hitting the poles together. The dancers must be agile and alert lest their legs be struck by the poles.

There were three Polish groups: The Falcons from St. Louis who appeared en masse singing beautifully a medley of Polish folk songs and performing one dance; the group from Milwaukee, Wis., under the direction of Alfred Skolnicki presenting one continuous dance of wedding scenes from Lowicz and Krakow whose outstanding numbers were the Zbojnicki Goral (Mountaineers) dances which required verve, vigor and a tireless barbaric agility; and the Chicago Poles from Northwestern Settlement House under the direction of V. F. Beliajus performing seven different dances during both appearances and making quite a hit with their Bialy Mazur.

The Lithuanians were represented by two groups. The first directed by Mrs. Ona Ivaška from Boston, Mass., danced beautifully the Kalvelis, Kepurine, Mikita and Jonkelis. They received a tremendous ovation for their Mikita (the stick dance). The second group, the Chicago ATEITIS dancers under the direction of V. F. Beliajus presented Dzuku, Voveraite, Lenciugelis, Ozelis and Blezdingelis in the afternoon. In the evening they performed the Aguonelis, Rugučiai, Mikita, Kubilas and Malūnelis, whose beautiful figures evoked spontaneous sounds of applause.

The Mexicans did not live up to their reputation for gaiety and vivacity; the "Artistic Group of the Mexican Society" tried hard to be artistic instead of natural. The singers who danced in front of the Chiapanecas line was redundant. Balladsingers might increase their interest if they were selected with more attention to pleasant voice quality and with greater limit set to the length of the ballads.

Negro singing groups always make an excellent impression. Singing is the soul of the Negro and each Negro group was a credit to its race.

Czechoslovakian youths from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, danced enchantingly their new Beseda with grace and beauty.

The Irish group from Chicago under the direction of Pat Roche was as good as ever; the Highlanders of Fayetteville, N. C., a group of handsomely kilted youngsters, did only one quite short reel. The Swiss from Monroe, Wis., the Switzerland of the United States, transformed the stage into a bit of the Schwytz with their yodeling, Alpine horn, St. Bernard dog, cheese, cow bells, flag twirling and wrestling.

Two groups made a truly colorful contribution to the